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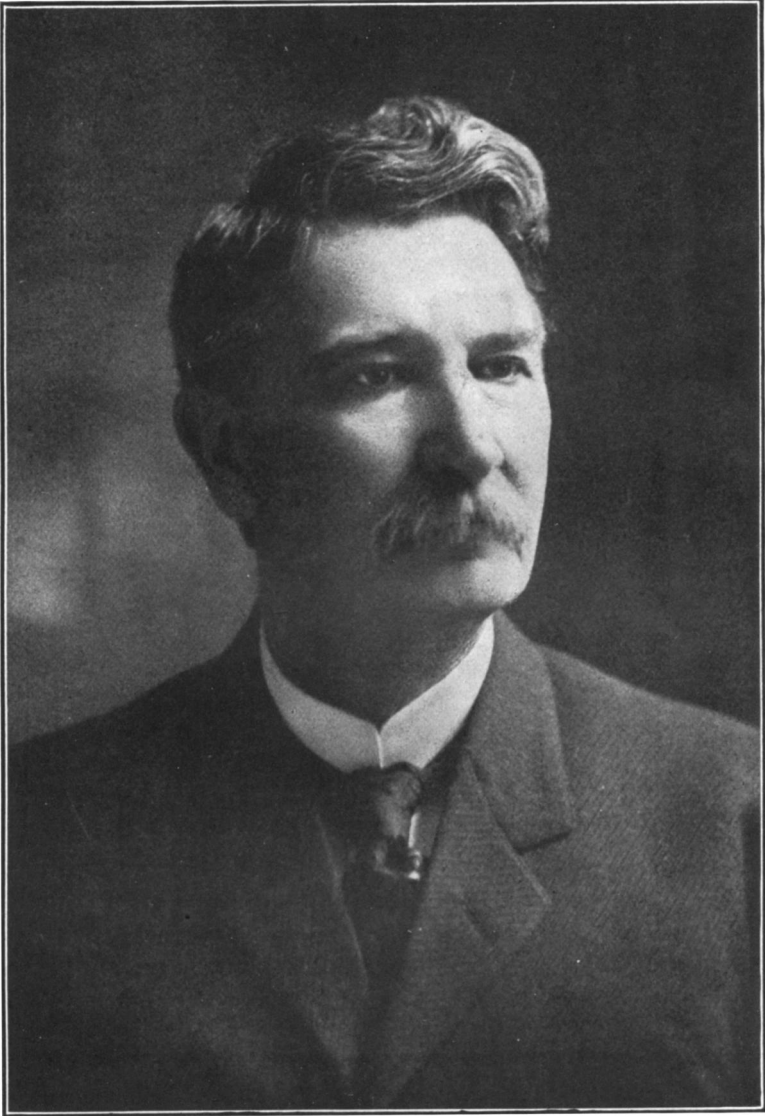
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ALFRED ORENDORFF

DEATH OF GENERAL ALFRED ORENDORFF, PRESIDENT OF THE ILLINOIS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

The Illinois State Historical Society has sustained a great loss by the death of its president, Gen. Alfred Orendorff, which occurred at his home in Springfield, Ill., October 22, 1909. General Orendorff had been sick for more than a year and those who attended the annual meeting of the Society held last May will remember the heroic struggle which he made against extreme weakness when he presided over the sessions of the meeting. This was practically his last public service.

The Illinois State Historical Society has been most fortunate in the men who have served it as president, the first of these being the late Hiram Williams Beckwith of Danville, Ill., whose name is first among those who have given time, labor, interest and unselfish devotion to the cause of State history; the second being that indefatigable worker and conscientious student whose name stands for accuracy in historical research, Dr. John F. Snyder of Virginia, Ill.

When, in January, 1905, Dr. Snyder declined re-election to the presidency of the Society, General Orendorff was elected in his place and for nearly five years he continued to hold the office.

While General Orendorff does not rank with Judge Beckwith and Dr. Snyder as a writer of historical books and monographs, he gave a genuine interest and devotion to the Society and its labors. He was a man of many affairs and he often said that he hoped to get his business into such shape that he would be able to give more time to the real study of western history. He was

a prominent lawyer and was connected with many fraternal orders. He was a man who was very fond of social affairs and was a ready and able speaker and was much in request for the social meetings of the orders to which he belonged, so that it was not easy for him to find the time for historical study, and his hope was that in the future he would be able to do the work along that line which he had in a measure planned to do. When he was a young lawyer he was the law partner of William H. Herndon, who had been Mr. Lincoln's partner in the practise of law. Through much study of the mass of material which has been printed about Mr. Lincoln and through his connection with Mr. Herndon he became much interested in the study of the life and work of Lincoln and he collected a considerable library of Lincolniana, including several priceless manuscripts, among them being some of the legal papers in the famous case of Mr. Lincoln against the Illinois Central Railroad Company.

General Orendorff was a Democrat in politics and was a strict party man and, while he, like all men, admired and venerated the character of Lincoln, he was a great admirer of Stephen A. Douglas. One of the acts of his administration of the affairs of the Historical Society in which he took the greatest pleasure was the celebration in 1908 of the semi-centennial of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858. These celebrations took place at the seven towns at which the original debates occurred, and they had been suggested and fostered by the Historical Society.

General Orendorff attended each of these celebrations and made an address at each place, and these addresses show his power as a writer and a thinker, though these powers are more clearly shown in his legal papers, of which the court records contain many. It may be said that General Orendorff's very large acquaintance gave the Historical Society a great gain in its membership. When, in 1905, he became president of the Society, it had

but two hundred and fifty-one members. During his presidency the membership increased to nearly one thousand members. He was a very affable and approachable man, one who entered into the spirit of every undertaking with which he was connected. In business or in social affairs he had a kind word for every one and a genuine interest in all of the people. He was a man whom children loved and trusted, and he had a high appreciation of the joys and privileges of his home life and the life of his neighbors and friends. He came into the management of the affairs of the Historical Society at a time when the labors of Judge Beckwith, Dr. Snyder, George N. Black, Judge David McCulloch, Captain Burnham, and others of that class of earnest historical workers, had founded the Society on broad and solid lines, and it remained for Alfred Orendorff to make it popular, to bring it to the attention of the people of the State, and this he succeeded in doing. He also, by his influence and large acquaintance, aided in securing recognition for the Society from the Legislature of the State. He loved the Illinois State Historical Society and no detail of its affairs was too small to secure his interest, and he labored for it unceasingly even when his health was so broken that he served the Society at the cost of suffering and weariness. He was called from life before he was an old man, and he had hoped and expected to give many more years of service to the Society. He was the man for the peculiar need of the Association when he was called to its head and he did good and loving service. The members who knew him, and nearly all were his friends, feel a deep sense of personal loss.

He was a good lawyer, a good citizen, a good neighbor and a good friend. His funeral, which was held in the First Presbyterian Church of Springfield, was largely attended, great numbers of his fraternal brethren being present, and hundreds of his old friends and neighbors, and all had a tender thought for the man who was gone, of his gentleness, of his thoughtfulness, of his geniality

and his hopefulness. In his young manhood, when scarcely more than a boy, he raised a Company for service in the War between the States. He was made captain of the Company, and so he began the years of his manhood in the service of his country and throughout his life he endeavored to continue this service by being a good citizen and doing for those with whom he came in contact the helpful, the just and the encouraging thing. Many a man and woman can testify to the gentle and unobtrusive helpfulness of this man.

“Better than honor and glory
and history’s iron pen
Was the thought of duty done
and the love of his fellowmen.”

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

Alfred Orendorff was born in Logan county, Illinois, in 1845. The father was a farmer and miller, who died in the year 1853, the son being at that time but eight years of age. He resided upon the old homestead farm until after his father’s death, when he accompanied his mother on her removal to Lincoln, Ill., where he attended the common schools. His early educational privileges were supplemented by study in the Illinois Wesleyan University at Bloomington, and his advanced literary course served as an excellent foundation upon which to rear the superstructure of professional knowledge. Making a choice of law as a life work, he matriculated in the Albany law school of New York, in which he completed a thorough course by graduation in the class of 1866.

He then returned to Illinois and established himself in practice in Springfield, becoming an associate of the firm of Herndon & Zane, who were successors of the firm of Lincoln & Herndon. When Mr. Zane withdrew from the firm on his election to the bench, Mr. Orendorff

became a partner of Mr. Herndon, under the style of Herndon & Orendorff, a relation that was maintained for fifteen years. He then became associated with James A. Creighton, under the firm name of Orendorff & Creighton, and when the junior member was elected to the bench Mr. Orendorff became associated with Robert H. Patton. He possessed all the requisite qualities of a successful lawyer, and the favorable judgment which the world placed upon him at the outset of his career was in no degree set aside or modified, but on the contrary strengthened by his able handling of the many important cases intrusted to his care. His strong intellect, keenly analytical, and trained in the severest school of reasoning and investigation, made him a distinguished lawyer, and in his career he manifested the industry which is as essential in the professions as in industrial and commercial life. His careful preparation of cases, and his extensive reading, brought to him a comprehensive knowledge of the principles of jurisprudence, and his name figures upon the legal records of Illinois as one of the foremost representatives of the calling which stands as the conservator of the rights and privileges of the individual.

General Orendorff has also been identified with the law-making bodies of the State. He was elected a member of the General Assembly in 1873, and served on the Judiciary Committee which adopted the statutory laws of the articles of the new Constitution. At the age of nineteen he organized and was commissioned captain of Company I, 133d Infantry, Volunteers.

He served as Adjutant-General during the administration of Governor Altgeld, 1893-96; and in the year 1882, and again in 1884, he was a candidate for State Treasurer on the Democratic ticket and succeeded in greatly reducing the Republican majority, polling a large vote, which indicated his personal popularity and the confidence reposed in him, not only by the Democrats of the State, but also by many of the adherents of the

opposition party. He was chairman of the Democratic State Central Committee and was frequently a delegate to the National Convention of his party. Unflinching in his allegiance to the Democratic platform, his earnest advocacy was the result of careful and diligent investigation. He had a statesman's grasp of affairs, and the questions which have divided public opinion into great parties have ever been to him matters of deep concern. His intense and well-directed efforts have also been a potent element in community affairs, and as a champion of many measures for the city's welfare his efforts have proved far-reaching and effective. He was at one time president of the Franklin Life Insurance Company of Springfield, and at the time of his death was president of the International Bank and Trust Company of Vinita, Okla. He was president of the Sangamon County Bar Association and was formerly president of the Illinois State Bar Association.

When the election commission law was adopted in Springfield he was named a member of the Springfield Election Commission and was elected president of that important local body, being a great factor in the upbuilding of one of the greatest and best organizations for the betterment of political conditions in this city's history.

He was prominent in Woodman and Masonic circles, and held membership in the Elks lodge, the Sangamo club of Springfield and the Iroquois club of Chicago. As an Odd Fellow he enjoyed prominence throughout the State, having been grand master of the Illinois Order of Odd Fellows and grand representative to the Sovereign Grand Lodge, I. O. O. F.

In 1870 General Orendorff was married to Miss Julia J. Williams, a native of Springfield and a daughter of Colonel John Williams. Mrs. Orendorff died in May, 1908. The family residence on South Second street has been the scene of many attractive social functions, for General Orendorff, his wife and children have been

widely and favorably known in society and church circles in Springfield. He leaves two daughters and a son.

A suitable memorial on the life and services of General Orendorff will be presented at the next annual meeting of the Society.